

The Socio-Economic Profile of Tea Garden Workers at Mokrong Tea Estate Village of Golaghat, Assam

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Abstract:

The present study is undertaken to investigate the socio-economic profile of the tea garden workers at Mokrong Tea Estate village of Golaghat District of Assam. The area under study is located in Golaghat subdivision of Golaghat district in Assam, India. According to Census Report 2011 information the location code or village code of Mokrong T E village is 294587. It is situated 26km away from Golaghat, which is both district & sub-district headquarter. Both qualitative and quantitative method of research has been applied in this study. The primary data has been gathered from both questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Secondary data have been collected from books, journals, reports published by different organizations and from internet. Questionnaire contains both closed and open-ended questions. A sample of 240 respondents has been taken for this study which is about 10% of the total population of the study area. A random sampling method was used for selecting the samples. It is true that there is lots of scope for further research in this area. Further research in larger population and sample size will surely increase the generalization of the findings. On the basis of the findings the stakeholders like government agencies, policy makers, management authorities will be able to formulate positive policies for the development of the socio economic profile of the study area in particular and tea garden community of the state as a whole.

Keywords: Socio-economic profile, Tea garden workers, Social environment.

1. Introduction:

There is an established definition of socio-economic profile. According to that established view the socioeconomic profile of an area is a collection of information about the economic and social conditions of a community. It helps different stakeholders in a welfare state to plan different strategies for its citizen and develop the community. The present study aims to investigate the socio-economic profile of tea garden workers at Mokrong Tea Estate village of Golaghat district of Assam. Tea is one of the most popular drinks in the world, second only to water. India occupies a very distinct place among the tea producing countries in the world. If we focus on data available in different domains, India is the second largest producer of tea globally and the tea produced in this country is the finest one because of the suitable geographical location. The northern part of the country is the biggest producer with 83% of the countries annual tea production. Assam located in northeastern part of the country is the highest producer of tea in the country. In the same way India is among the top five countries in the world

making about 10% of the total exports. Tea is a significant cash crop which has remarkable value in social fabric, cultural legacy, history and economy of Assam as well as India. It is fully a labour based agro industry and the whole process of tea production is utterly dependent upon the tea garden workers. There is a history of migration of the tea garden labourers of Assam. Tea grew widely in the hills and forests of Assam since time immemorial but the organized tea plantation in Assam is associated with the colonial period. The recorded history of tea industry in North East India is nearly 170 years old and it can be traced back to 1837 A.D. The first experimental tea estates in Assam were established in 1837 at Chabua in Dibrugarh district in upper Assam. But later on the first tea company, namely the Assam Tea Company started production of tea on a commercial basis in Assam and it is followed by Jorhat Tea Company in 1858. With this history of organized tea industry in Assam, the history of the tea community of Assam also develops. The tea industry requires huge manual labor force for the ground work. As there were shortage of labour during the initial stage so the planters had to hire huge numbers of people from different regions of colonial India. The people were imported from different places, e.g. the Mundan & Gonds from Bihar, Santals, Tantis & Bhumij from Bengal & Bihar, Orangs from Bihar & Orissa, Goalas from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh & Uttar Pradesh and Bogas from Tamil Nadu (Kar, 2005). These people had different culture, dialects, rituals, religious beliefs with different identity. But, in due course of time they started to assimilate with the local people and adopt the local culture leaving behind their own cultural traits. This assimilation grew a new identity among the people of different identities which is now regarded as tea garden community.

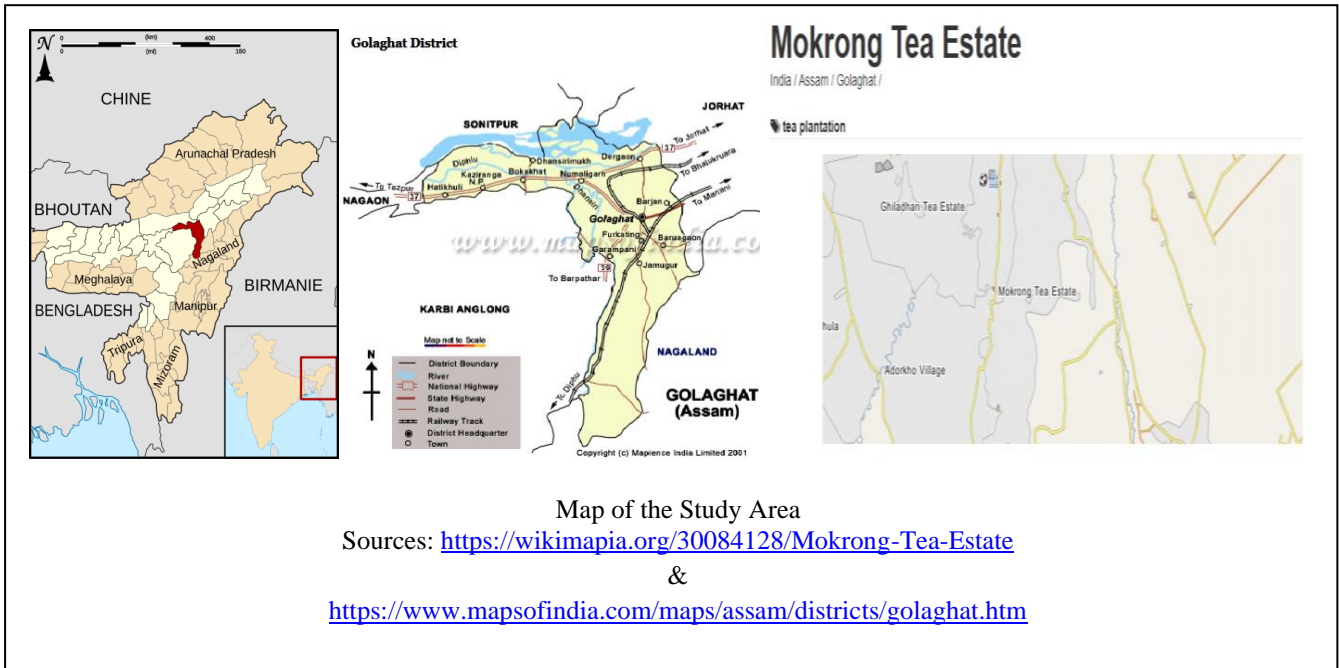
2. The Significance of the Study:

The study is undertaken to investigate the socio-economic profile of tea garden workers at Mokrong Tea Estate village of Golaghat district of Assam. The people of the study area have to engage themselves in laborious activities of tea garden for their day to day earnings. Just like the common scenario they have to work very hard but the livelihood of the tea garden workers are not satisfactory. It has been noticed that there was no specific research on these aspect in the study area. That is why the investigation was undertaken with a serious and dedicated effort with the objective of knowing the socio-economic profile of the tea garden workers of the study area which will put a light on the relevant issues as a whole.

3. The Area of the Study:

The area under study is located in Golaghat subdivision of Golaghat district in Assam, India. According to Census Report 2011 information the location code or village code of Mokrong T E village is 294587. It is situated 26km away from Golaghat, which is both district & sub-district headquarter. The total geographical area of village is 598.97 hectares. It has a total population of 2,510 peoples, out of which male population is 1,251 while female population is 1,259. Literacy rate of the area is 49.20% out of which 59.15% males and 39.32% females are literate. There are about 538 houses. Golaghat is nearest town which is approximately 26km away.

Location Map of the Study Area



4. Objective of the Study:

Defining aims and objectives in any study is a very important aspect. It gives the requisite direction for conducting research. The aim and objective of the present study are as following:-

1. To study the socio-economic profile of the tea garden workers in the study area on the basis of the data collected from the respondents.
2. To analyze different parameters on the basis of observation to acquire the knowledge about the present condition of tea garden workers in the study area.

5. Materials and Methods:

Research methodology is the most important aspect of research work and is a way to systematically solve research problems. It facilitates the research work and provides reliability and validity to it. Data collection is an integral part of the research methodology that plays a pivotal role throughout the whole research work. It is the process of collecting and evaluating information or data from multiple sources to find answers to research problems, answer questions, evaluate outcomes, and forecast trends and probabilities. It is an essential phase in all types of research and accurate data collection is necessary to make research successful, ensure quality assurance, and keep research integrity. Both qualitative and quantitative method of research has been applied in this study. The primary data has been gathered from both questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Secondary data have been collected from books, journals, reports published by different organizations and internet. As sufficient information is not available from secondary sources, therefore the present study would build upon the information collected from the primary sources. Questionnaire contains both closed and open-ended questions. A sample of 240 respondents has been taken for this study which is about 10% of the total population of the study area. A random sampling method was used for selecting the samples.

6. Limitation of the Study:

In the study, only a single tea garden was taken with 240 samples randomly selected from the tea garden workers. It is difficult to draw an overall conclusion on socio-economic profile of tea garden workers as a whole from study of a single garden because the demographic pattern, management policies and other relevant matters are different in case of different gardens. It is expected the study will put a light in the study area through which we shall have an idea about the socio-economic profile of the inhabitants. It is true that there is lots of scope for further research in this area. Further research in larger population and sample size will surely increase the generalization of the findings.

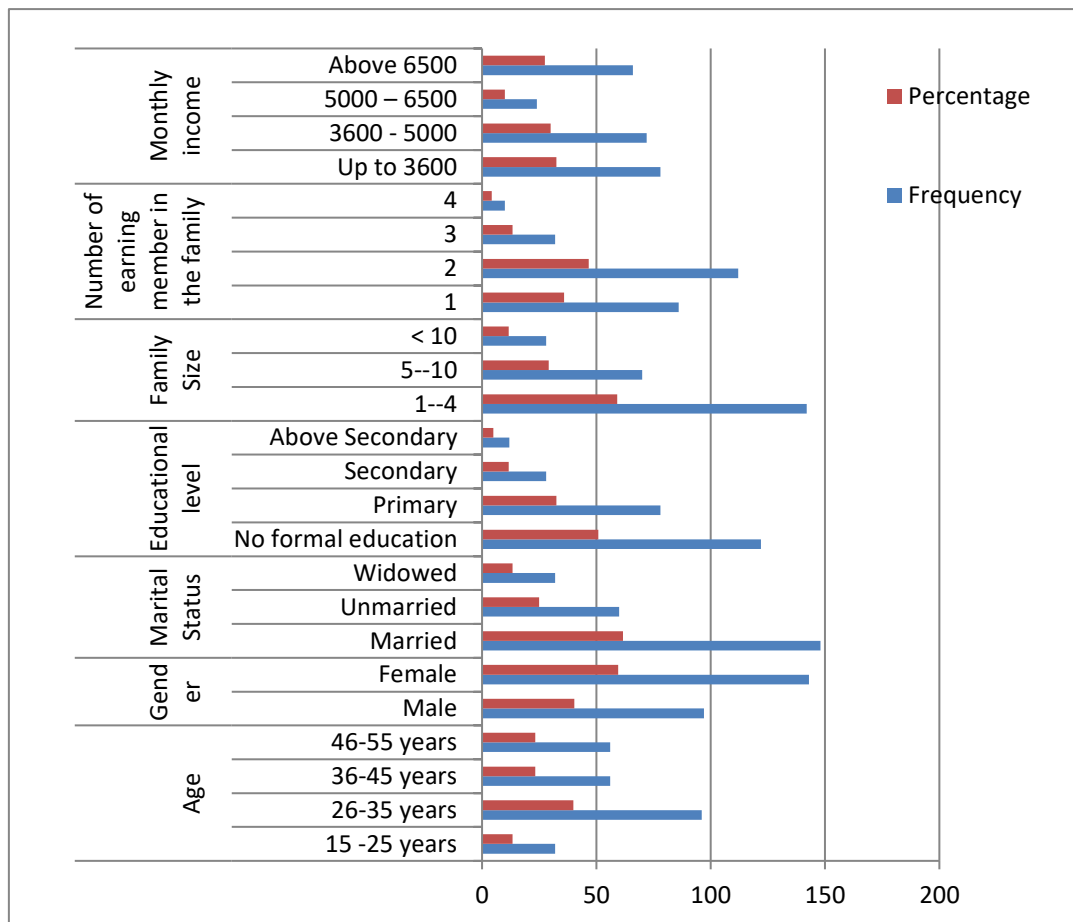
7. Major Findings and Discussion:

7.1 Characteristics of Sample Population at the Study Area: The data collected from the respondent show that highest number of sample population is in the age group of 26 to 35 years with 40%. Just like the common scenario in most of the tea gardens the ratio of female workers is higher than the male workers with 59.58% in comparison with 40.42% female workers. About 75% respondents are married where about 13% are widowed and other 25% are unmarried. Education level of any population reflects its socio-economic profile. Here in this study area more than 50% respondents are devoid of formal education. 32.5% have primary education and others have secondary or higher than that. The data of family size shows that they prefer to maintain small families because of various reasons. Most of the respondents about 59.16 percent prefer to live in a small family with 1 to 4 numbers of family members. The monthly income of the respondents is less than seven thousand five hundred rupees where 62.5 percent respondents reveal that their monthly income is less than seven thousand. This low level of monthly income affects their socio economic profile very much. The higher percentage of illiteracy among the elder people makes the education level even more notable. Education is a very important parameter while measuring the socio – economic profile of an area. The policy makers should take special measure regarding that matter.

Table: 1 Characteristics of Sample Population at the Study Area

Characters	Frequency	Percentage
Age	15 -25 years	32
	26-35 years	96
	36-45 years	56
	46-55 years	56
Gender	Male	97
	Female	143
Marital Status	Married	148
	Unmarried	60
	Widowed	32
Educational level	No formal education	122
	Primary	78
	Secondary	28
	Above Secondary	12
Family Size	1 - 4	142
	5 - 10	70
	< 10	28

Number of earning member in the family	1	86	35.83333
	2	112	46.66667
	3	32	13.33333
	4	10	4.166667
Monthly income	Up to 5000	78	32.5
	5000 - 7500	72	30
	7500 – 10000	24	10
	Above 10000	66	27.5

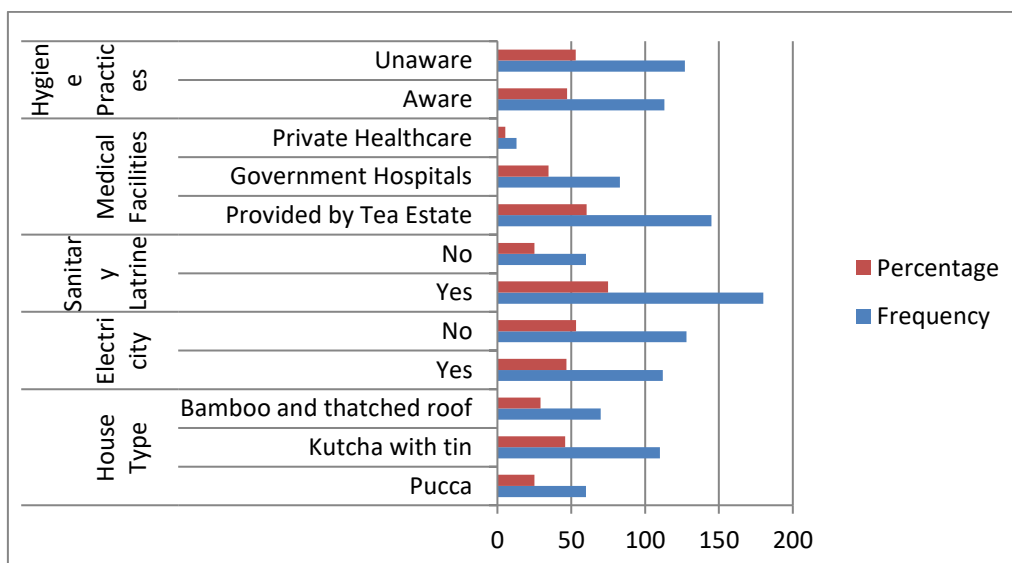


7.2 Different Facilities Available in the Study Area: Through the questionnaires and observation attempt has been made to investigate different facilities that are available in the study area because such type of facilities reflect the socio - economic profile of any area. 25 per cent of the respondents have their pucca type of housing facilities while about 46 per cent live in kutcha houses made with mud wall and tin roof. Another 29 per cent have houses made with bamboo and thatched roof. The permanent workers have their own quarters allotted by the owner of the tea garden. But such type of housing facilities is not provided to all workers. Most of the casual workers have their houses made with bamboo and thatched roof. The workers have to maintain such type of houses by themselves because there is not any provision of such type of allowances from the side of the management authority. The electricity is not provided by the management to 53% respondents. They have to manage by themselves. The present government is conscious about that matter and provides benefit to the workers through various schemes.

So, the scenario in the study area is not so deplorable regarding this matter. Majority of the respondents uses sanitary latrine. The data reveals that 75 percent of the respondents use sanitary latrine provided by the management authorities or state and central government. It is the result of the policy of government bodies which are constructed under Swatcha Bharat mission or such type of schemes. For health care facilities most of the people have to depend upon tea garden managed hospital. The other 34% go to the nearby government run hospitals. About 5% respondents can provide for private healthcare facilities. It is because of their financial issues. The respondents reveal that with the low level of income they face lots of difficulties to maintain their day to day expenses. After maintaining the day to day expenses they do not have enough money to provide for the private healthcare facilities which is very expensive. It is known that only about 47 percent of the respondents are aware about health and hygiene practices. The other 53 percent are not conscious about it. The overall scenario in the study area is not so unsatisfactory in comparison with the national scenario.

Table: 2 Different Facilities Available in the Study Area

Characters		Frequency	Percentage
House Type	Pucca	60	25
	Kutchha with tin	110	45.83333
	Bamboo and thatched roof	70	29.16667
Electricity	Yes	112	46.66667
	No	128	53.33333
Sanitary Latrine	Yes	180	75
	No	60	25
Medical Facilities	Provided by Tea Estate	145	60.41667
	Government Hospitals	83	34.58333
	Private Healthcare	13	5.416667
Hygiene Practices	Aware	113	47.08333
	Unaware	127	52.91667

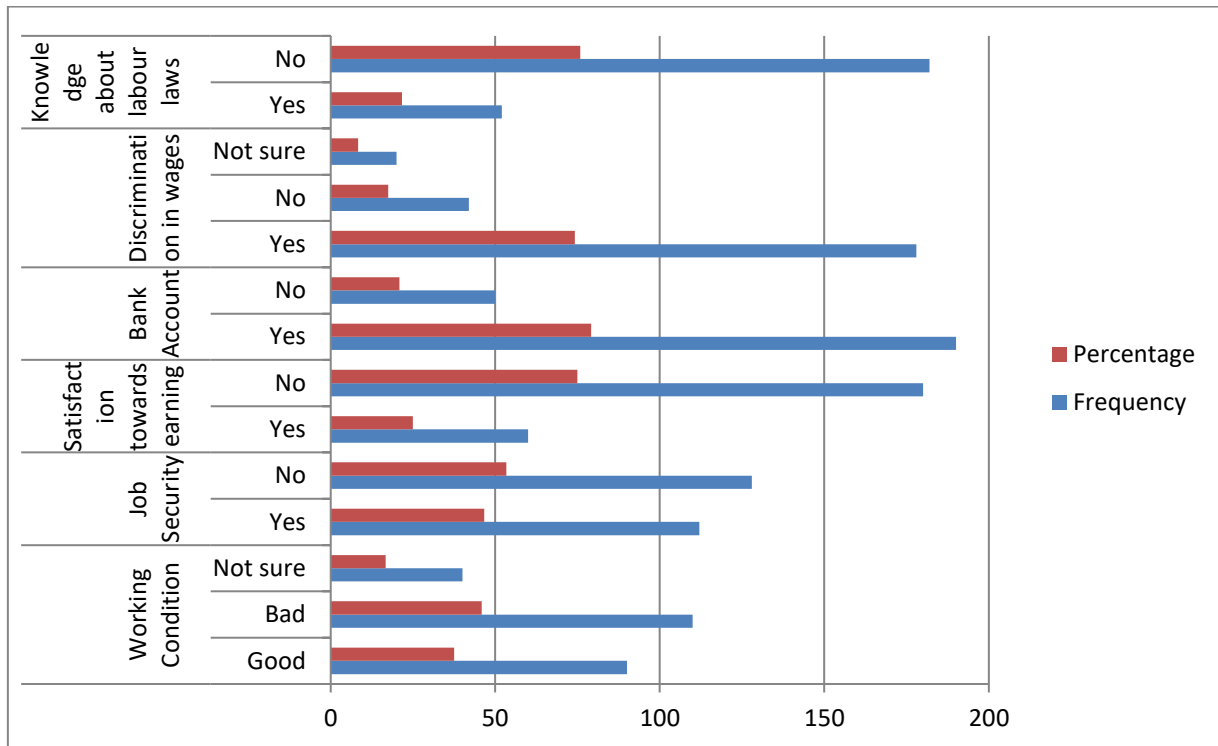


7.3 Working Condition of the Respondents in the Study Area: Working condition in an industry reflects the socio-economic profile of the people involve there. The data received from respondents of the study area reflects that the working condition is not satisfactory. Only 37.5% believe that it is good. Tea plantation work involves strenuous labor under harsh weather conditions, including exposure to pesticides and other chemicals. It is also noticeable that the major workforce of the tea industry is female workers. The study area is also not different from it. The females are naturally weaker section of the society. They need extra care in comparison with male. In such situation the management should take proper step for making the working condition suitable for the workforce. Most of them believe that they do not have job security. It is about 53.33%. In the same way 75% of the respondents are not satisfied with their earnings from their profession and about 74% believe that there is discrimination regarding their wages. The main reason behind it their ignorance about the existing labour laws. Lack of job satisfaction and their unhappiness regarding the wages put very negative impact upon the socio – economic profile of the respondents. It has been observed that the young people of the households migrate to different places of the country in search of better options. Those who are unable to do so they prefer to work for the people of nearby areas in other works which are not related to tea industry. The reason for this is the low wages they earn while working in the tea garden. Some respondents reveal that they have to work overtime beside their day to day professional work in the tea garden because sometimes they are not able to maintain the extra burden of the family matters through their earnings. Most of the respondents have bank account. Data reveals that 79% of the respondents have bank accounts. It is because of the policy of the government like “Jan Dhan Account Yojona”. But from the observation it is known that most of them cannot maintain the minimum balance because of the low income as well as ignorance about the benefit of savings. Digital mode of transaction is not common among them. The new generation is aware about it but their situation does not permit to perform the digital transaction in moderate scale also. Tea garden workers are the integral part of the tea industry. But they are paid minimal wages which diminishes their living standards. It affects the socio – economic profile of the respondents. Issues related to delayed payments, discrepancies in paying bonuses and other matter are also relevant.

Table: 3 Working Conditions of the Respondents in the Study Area

Characters		Frequency	Percentage
Working Condition	Good	90	37.5
	Bad	110	45.83333
	Not sure	40	16.66667
Job Security	Yes	112	46.66667
	No	128	53.33333
Satisfaction towards earning	Yes	60	25
	No	180	75
Bank Account	Yes	190	79.16667
	No	50	20.83333

Discrimination in wages	Yes	178	74.16667
	No	42	17.5
	Not sure	20	8.333333
Knowledge about labour laws	Yes	52	21.66667
	No	182	75.83333



8. Conclusion:

The socio – economic profile of any area can be measured relying upon various parameters. The present study was conducted to investigate the socio-economic profile of tea garden workers at Mokrong Tea Estate village of Golaghat district of Assam with moderate data available and accessible. The study is based on only 10% of the total population and the population data was collected on the basis of census report of 2011. It is widely known that tea workers contribute significantly to the GDP of India. They are significant to the economy, even though their socio-economic level is still below average. Research studies show that illiteracy is one of the main reasons behind it. Their low level of living is made more severe by their low wages. Their confidence and ability to stand up for their fundamental rights have been weakened by their struggle for the survival. To overcome these obstacles, both government and management authorities are required to take some necessary steps. From the study it is seen that the socio – economic profile of the study area is different, unorganized and unusual rather than the normal and usual life of mainstream inhabitants. They are also different in their social structure than the traditional social structure of common people of Assam. The present scenario of their socio – economic profile is not satisfactory because of having been deprived from the basic needs. They are far from touch of modernization, fully separated and alienated from the mainstream of culture. There is lots of scope for further research in this area. Further research should be carried out on a larger population and sample

size which will increase the generalization of the findings. On the basis of these findings the stakeholders will be able to formulate positive policies for the development of the socio economic profile of the study area in particular and tea garden community of the state as a whole.

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